

The Humanitarian

Volume 1, Issue 2

September 22, 2005

82nd deploys real world decon site

By Sgt. Michael J. Carden
82nd Airborne Division
Public Affairs Office

NEW ORLEANS — Sgt. 1st Class Louis Hicks has been in the U.S. Army Chemical Corps for 15 years, and this is the first time he's ever used his chemical training in a real-world situation.

For the first time in the company's history, Hicks and his Paratroopers of the 3rd Platoon, 21st Chemical Company (Airborne), 82nd Airborne Division, successfully set up and established a real-world decontamination site – and did so in an urban environment.

The platoon has been working around the clock, decontaminating individuals and vehicles that have been in contact with the polluted waters inhabiting much of New Orleans.

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and two broken levees on the Inner Harbor Canal left much of Orleans Parish underwater. Numerous Soldiers and other government agencies have been conduct-

See “decon” page 6



Pvt. Jerel Ridgley, chemical specialist, 21st Chemical Company, 82nd Airborne Division, sprays down a Humvee at the Task Force All American decontamination site. Ridgley uses hot-soapy water to decontaminate the vehicle from any bacteria or contaminants it may have come in contact with near the polluted waters that inhabit much of New Orleans. (Photo by Sgt. Michael J. Carden, 82nd Airborne Public Affairs Office)

Battalion commander becomes linguist, liaison for local Vietnamese family

By Spc. Thomas Day
40th Public Affairs Detachment

NEW ORLEANS – Maj. Melinda Morgan, an Air Force officer working for the Army's 82nd Airborne Division, had spent all day pleading with a New Orleans family to evacuate their home. They were a couple in their fifties with two teenage sons living in an area severely contaminated by the Hurricane Katrina flood waters.

They were also Vietnamese immigrants who spoke only broken English.

Unable to communicate with the family enough to convince them of the seriousness of not evacuating, Morgan turned to someone she knew could help.

Lt. Col. Viet Luong, the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment commander, did not come to New Orleans to do this type of mission. “I don't go around rescuing people,” Luong said. “But that's one of the few special circumstances where linguistic and cultural skills come into play.”

Luong could help Morgan communicate with the family because he too is a Vietnamese immigrant, nearly fluent in Vietnamese. His family – seven sisters included – was evacuated out of the Vietnam war from his home just outside of Saigon. Their new home became Los Angeles, where Luong and his sisters lived in abject poverty but worked furiously in school.

The seven sisters went on to become attorneys, small business owners, media producers – Viet Luong decided to become a Soldier, earning a Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship at the University of Southern California. While his sisters stayed situated in Southern California (and became very successful), Viet Luong spent most of his career in staff and command positions with the 82nd Airborne Division and the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Morgan's appeal came from the West New Orleans neighborhood of Gretna.

“Maj. Morgan, for some reason, was very attached to that family,” Luong

See “linguist” page 3

Soldiers affected by animal survivors

By **Spc. Chris Jones,**
40th Public Affairs Detachment

NEW ORLEANS — Soldiers, by and large, are pretty tough people. They have a low vulnerability to emotional breakdown, which is the common result of someone who frequently overcomes fear, seclusion and personal anxiety.

Unlike civilians, who have a tendency to cry over pretty much anything, from their job to their love life to their team losing a football game, Soldiers are capable of taking common heartache and channeling it into only a few areas of the heart. Most human beings possess the same amount of emotions, but not everyone is affected by the same things.

The result of this is simple: Soldiers can withstand 99 percent of the challenges that face him, but that tiny one percent can cause severe suffering.

I'm here to talk about that one percent. While I am here in New Orleans, only a few weeks past Hurricane Katrina, it is a good time to talk about that one percent.

What is that one percent for Soldiers? What is the one thing — or the small number of things

— that can take a Soldier's heart and smash it?

From what I have seen, I believe that one percent, that area where Soldiers are so emotionally vulnerable, are animals, particularly cats and dogs.

I don't think Soldiers sign up to see starving dogs or sick cats. A Soldier enlists knowing

of Mississippi where I was last week, the homeless, hungry animals are among the most affecting images for the troops on the ground — and, yes, for me.

One guy in my unit, Spc. McCollum, came back from Gulfport, Miss., with pictures of a little chihuahua in his arms. His eyes were a bit damp as he

Another cat was saved after its owner kayaked down the streets, or rivers as they later became, all the way to the safety of dry land.

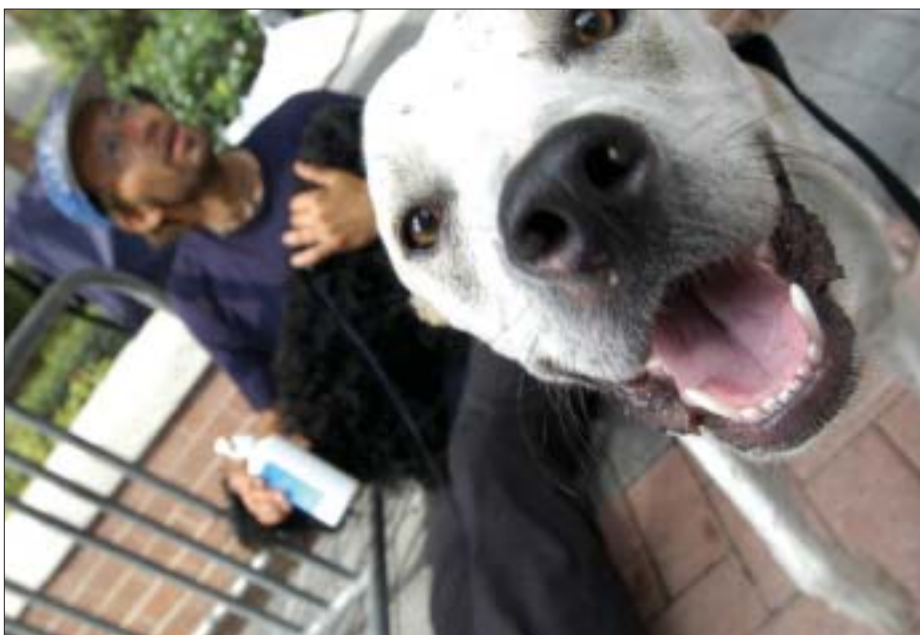
I could go on and on about the stories I've heard about animals surviving Katrina and lingering several weeks for their rescue, but that would fit easier in the space of a book.

As heartbreaking as it is to see these animals in a state of deprivation, there is equal exultation in seeing them treated, fed and housed.

If I had to guess, I would say the reason animals have such an impact on troops is because both animals and Soldiers share that tenacious will to survive, and that survivor's attitude makes life that much more precious — and beautiful.

Many have died — people and their pets. I could cry. I'm sure, when I look back on this disaster, I will cry. But in the meantime, I find it much more appropriate to hear the survivor stories and give myself a reason to smile.

There is always time for reflection in the wake of tragedy. That's what makes survival so beautiful.



NEW ORLEANS — Butch, a Bulldog-mix, displays a positive attitude after being treated for lesions by Derrick Brzeski (rear), a Humane Police volunteer, at a makeshift animal shelter downtown. In the background, Brzeski is seen treating a poodle-mix for an eye disease which caused the dog to go blind. Brzeski, a Poland native who has lived in Houston for the last 15 years, is one of many volunteers for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, an organization which has helped heal and save the lives of many animals in the regions affected by Hurricane Katrina. (Photo by Spc. Chris Jones, 40th PAD)

he may see a dead human body or to be the one who has to kill that person. But on the streets of New Orleans, or on the coast

raved about the resiliency of the little dog to survive in a city that was absolutely annihilated by the storm.

The Humanitarian

Commanding General
Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV

Task Force PAO
Maj. Amy E. Hannah

Task Force PAO NCOIC
Sgt. 1st Class Chris Fletcher

Editor
Staff Sgt. Sharon McBride

Journalists
Sgt. Michael Carden
Spc. Thomas Day
Spc. Joshua M. Risner
Spc. Chris Jones
Pfc. Jacqueline Hawe
Pfc. Amanda Jackson

This Army funded newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army overseas. Contents of the "The Humanitarian" are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, or the 82nd Airborne Division. The "The Humanitarian" is produced by the 40th Public Affairs Detachment out of Fort Campbell, Ky. in support of the Task Force All-American Public Affairs Office. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Task Force All American Public Affairs Officer.

18 years apart, hurricane brings father, son together

By Spc. Chris Jones,
40th Public Affairs Detachment

NEW ORLEANS — In the last three days, Spc. Jacob Leslie turned 21, received a promotion and met his father, whom he hadn't seen since he was three years old.

This all happened in a city whose other families were split apart by Hurricane Katrina.

"Being able to see him face-to-face, it's so cool," said Leslie, standing beside his father outside the University of New Orleans.

Leslie, an infantryman with the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, spent most of Friday with his father, Staff Sgt. Charles Leslie, an artilleryman with 2nd Battalion, 18th Field Artillery Regiment, Oregon National Guard.

After showering Friday morning, Spc. Leslie, packed his uniform in a bag and walked to breakfast, on the Naval Support Activity base. Realizing he had grabbed two trousers instead of a trouser

and a top, he walked back to the shower tent. On the way, he overheard a group of officers call out his last name. He immediately stood at attention. "Yes, sir?" He said.

Then Spc. Leslie heard his

"I knew immediately it was my dad," he said.

Since then, the two have been taking every chance possible to see each other.

"I knew there would be a point in time when I would

occasional phone calls, so both were aware of which Army units the two were a part of.

"Literally across the country," said Staff Sgt. Leslie of his son living in North Carolina and himself in Oregon.

When Staff Sgt. Leslie deployed to New Orleans to support the military's hurricane relief effort, he found out his son had arrived in the area only a few days prior.

"He made the first contact," said the elder Leslie, "and once he did that, I made the push to find him."

Leaders of both units helped the father and son come together,

finding out where each was located in the city and allotting time for them to meet each other, said Staff Sgt. Leslie.

"The first time I saw him,"

See "reunited" page 8



NEW ORLEANS — Staff Sgt. Charles Leslie of the Oregon National Guard and Spc. Jacob Leslie of the 82nd Airborne Division spend some time together Friday night at the University of New Orleans after their first meeting in 18 years earlier that morning. Both are deployed to support the military's Hurricane Katrina relief effort. (Photo by Spc. Chris Jones, 40th PAD)

first name.

"And nobody calls me 'Jacob' in the Army," he said.

From behind the group came a man whose nameplate also read 'Leslie.'

meet him," said Staff Sgt. Leslie. "I just didn't know where or how."

According to the elder Leslie, he and his son had kept in contact through letters and

"linguist" **continued from page 1**

remembered. "She had tried to work with that family all day, and they weren't budging."

He convoyed over to the area almost immediately after fielding Morgan's request.

"Their concerns were that they had no close relatives or friends that they could stay with and they would be

isolated from the Vietnamese community." Money also was a concern.

The family complained to Luong that they simply did not have enough money for travel in and out of New Orleans.

Luong left his number with the family and turned to his sister, Ming, a producer for the television program "Inside Edition," for help.

"I asked her to energize the

Vietnamese-American community in Southern California."

Ming contacted the office of L.A. city councilman Andy Quach (also a Vietnamese-American), the Vietnamese Businessman Association, and Vietnamese Pharmacist Association.

All were eager to be involved.

"Everyone of those organizations assured us that

they were prepared to receive the family and provide financial assistance as well as shelter," Lt. Col. Luong said.

A week after Luong's visit, the family has not called his number for help. They may still be in their home, though Luong is not certain.

"They may have chosen to go to Houston. They have a large Vietnamese population in Houston."

Clearing roads one limb at a time

The Air Force teams up with the 82nd to get clean up done

By Spc. Joshua M. Risner
40th Public Affairs Detachment

Engineers from Air Force units around the country assembled at Louis Armstrong International Airport to participate in the Task Force All American relief effort in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The engineers moved out to areas around Canal Street, which runs by the French Quarter aboard a civilian bus. Their job: clear the roads of tree branches.

The branches had already been moved out of the road, but most were too large to haul away. The engineers got out their chainsaws and cut them into smaller, more manageable pieces.

"I used to live out here back in '94," said Staff Sgt. Jon Ammon, 4th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron. "It's really heartfelt to see the empty streets."

The engineers cleared nearly four miles worth of debris in a day's work. "We got some good work done today," said 2nd Lt. Rob Ulmer, 4th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron.

"These guys are all volunteers who wanted to see the city. We've been doing this for four days now and we're trying to get everybody out to the city at least once."

For Ammon, the work has a special significance. "I've deployed so many times, but this is the first time I've deployed somewhere in the states," he said. "It's good to finally help out at home."

"I've deployed so many times, but this is the first time I've deployed somewhere in the states. It's good to finally help out at home."

— Staff Sgt. Jon Ammon,
4th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron



(Above) An Airman saws a massive branch into smaller pieces to clear the roads of New Orleans and enable cleanup teams to haul them away. The team is made up of volunteers currently living at Louis Armstrong International Airport. (Left) The engineers cleared approximately four miles on Canal Street in one day. They have been at this for four days now. (Photos by Spc. Joshua M. Risner, 40th PAD)

82nd takes action in the 'Big Easy'



shots...



cleanup...

NEW ORLEANS — (Above) Spc. Andrew Carson from C Company, 782nd Main Support, 82nd Airborne Division, administers a Tetanus shot to a woman who lives in an area affected by Hurricane Katrina. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Ricky R. Melton, 55th Combat Camera) (Left) Spc. Joshua Alston and Sgt. Vanessa Gonzalez, from C Company the 313th Military Intelligence Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division help clear side streets of the debris left by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Ricky R. Melton, 55th Combat Camera)

decon...

NEW ORLEANS — Pfc. Cribbett a paratrooper from the 21st Chemical Company, 82nd Airborne Division, decontaminates a High Mobility Multi-Wheeled Vehicle, (HMMWV), from the 55th Combat Camera in the French Quarter. The 21st decons any military or civilian vehicles that come in contact with the contaminated flood water. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher J. Crawford, 55th Combat Camera)



“decon”
continued from page 1

ing search and rescue missions in and around those areas since the storm ended. The water levels rose as high as 10 to 15 feet in some communities, leaving the risk of biological and chemical contamination a constant threat.

Bacteria and toxic-industrial chemicals from household products, power and food-processing plants, vehicle fluids, sewage and the dead pollute the waters. Once that fact was established, Staff Sgt. Richard Bear, regimental chemical defense noncommissioned officer, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, informed his unit of the necessity for a decontamination site.

“I found out that our guys were patrolling and spending a lot of time near the water, so I decided that we needed a decontamination site,” Bear said. “Because of the biological and toxic-industrial chemicals in the water, we determined it necessary to have decontamination support from 21st Chem. (Co.).”

Bear and the 21st Chem. Co. quickly got the project in motion. They picked a centralized location in the French Market area for easy access by the 505th PIR and supporting units in the French Quarter of Downtown New Orleans.

The site operates similar to a carwash. Paratroopers and Soldiers, federal and state law enforcement agencies, emergency medical teams, as well as civilian media, line up their vehicles to be sprayed

down by chemical defense-trained Paratroopers.

The troopers use bleach and hot-soapy water from high-pressured hose, or pressure washers, to prevent the spread of bacterial diseases. Two lanes are used for vehicle decontamination.



Spc. Adolfo Cosino, chemical specialist, 21st Chemical Company, 82nd Airborne Division, sprays down a Humvee Sept. 14, 2005, at the Task Force All American Decontamination site. Cosino uses hot-soapy water to decontaminate the vehicle from any bacteria or contaminants it may have come in contact with near the polluted waters that inhabit much of New Orleans. (Photo by Sgt. Michael J. Carden, 82nd Airborne Division PAO)

If a person falls into or has physical contact with the water while on patrol, they have immediate access to the personnel decontamination tent. The tent is equipped with eight shower heads for individuals to clean themselves with water and anti-bacterial soap, said 1st Lt. Aimee Hemery, platoon leader, 21st Chem. Co.

Individuals are advised to check for particular rashes while they shower. Medics are on-hand in case rashes or other skin irritations are discovered. So far, nine people have found rashes and were referred to medical care, Hemery added.

“There is a lot of bacteria out there,” said Capt. Richard Maltbie, 21st Chem. Co.

commander. “We’re trying to prevent the spread of these bacteria and other chemicals, so our Soldiers can carry on with their mission in a healthy manner.”

The company decontaminated more than 450 vehicles and more than 190 people in

protective suits and masks. However, defense against toxic-industrial chemicals and biological threats are what the Chemical Corps is evolving towards – rather than nerve gas and nuclear weapons they’d been training to react to in recent years, Maltbie said.

“This isn’t the exact mission we train for, but the principals are still the same,” Maltbie said. “The guys understood what was supposed to happen and they adapted.”

“This mission is important because of the way the battlefield is shaped today,” Bear said. “It’s not all about (wearing a mask and protective suit) and going through the gas chamber. That’s good training, but this experience puts us on track for the way the Chemical Corps is shaping today.”

As the only airborne chemical company in the Army,

the Paratroopers of 21st Chem. Co. are already proud of their heritage. They hope their experience and success in New Orleans will be studied by the Army’s chemical field for future generations to learn from. Their decontamination site will solidify the need to train more often for a chemical environment, so commanders can better utilize their chemical assets, Bear said.

“Our time in New Orleans has been a good experience and great learning tool for the Army,” Bear said. “This is the perfect platform for us. Hopefully we can document the progress and establish new (tactics, techniques and procedures) for how to decontaminate in an urban environment.”

“This is like the Super Bowl for the Chemical Corps,” Bear said. This platoon has worked tirelessly to support this mission, and they’re not going to stop until the mission’s complete.”

Though the company has had much success in their current operation, they know this mission isn’t exactly what they’ve trained for. Usually, a decontamination site is set up at the source of the contaminants. The Paratroopers usually work while wearing

the Paratroopers of 21st Chem. Co. are already proud of their heritage. They hope their experience and success in New Orleans will be studied by the Army’s chemical field for future generations to learn from. Their decontamination site will solidify the need to train more often for a chemical environment, so commanders can better utilize their chemical assets, Bear said.

“Our time in New Orleans has been a good experience and great learning tool for the Army,” Bear said. “This is the perfect platform for us. Hopefully we can document the progress and establish new (tactics, techniques and procedures) for how to decontaminate in an urban environment.”

New Orleans' own Paul Prudhomme feeds 82nd troops

By Spc. Thomas Day
40th Public Affairs Detachment

NEW ORLEANS — Paul Prudhomme, the man commonly credited with introducing the world to Cajun style cooking, came to the Navy Support Activity base Sunday with a 18-wheel truck and his staff.

His mission: To cook the 82nd Airborne Division lunch.

"We like to feed you guys. We appreciate what you do," Prudhomme tells the troops.

The preparation started from Pine Bluff, Ark., where Prudhomme and his company, Chef Paul Prudhomme Louisiana Enterprises, evacuated their hometown of New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina.

They were holed up in Arkansas for five days, where he and company President Shawn McBride started plotting their return to the Crescent City.

From Arkansas, Prudhomme and McBride brought their idea to Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, a man they had met before in a similar "feed the troops" tour stops in South Korea. Honoré quickly responded. "He told us, 'Start with the 82nd,'" McBride recalled.

After an early morning preparing for the 3,000-plus Soldiers Prudhomme expected for the event, lunch was served just before noon — a tomato-based Shrimp and Chicken Creole with Prudhomme's "Magic" Cajun spice. It was a welcome break from the MRE doldrums.

"This," said Pfc. Edward Lee, 2nd



Soldiers of 82nd Airborne Division sample some authentic Cajun cuisine, courtesy of Chef Paul Prudhomme. The fare included Creole sauce with chicken and Andouille sausage, all made from scratch. The lunch was provided by Prudhomme's company. (Photo by Spc. Josh Risner, 40th PAD)

Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, "is the best food I've had in two weeks."

If Prudhomme has his way, he will be cooking a lot more for deployed Soldiers.

He has started working with the U.S.

Military to improve MREs, including adding a pack of his Magic Cajun spice into every package.

"We're excited about it — we want to make (MRE's) better."

His short term project, however, focuses only on reopening his French

**"This is the best food I've had in two weeks."
— Pfc. Edward Lee,
2nd Battalion,
505th Parachute
Infantry Regiment**



Chef Paul Prudhomme (Photo by Spc. Josh Risner, 40th PAD)

Quarter restaurant, "K. Paul's Louisiana Kitchen."

Prudhomme plans on going to go back to the restaurant next week, clean up the damage done by the Hurricane and try to open it back up next week.

Here kitty, kitty.....



NEW ORLEANS — Artillerymen from the 82nd Airborne Division, deployed to New Orleans to support the Hurricane Katrina relief effort, search a duplex in the city Tuesday, looking for eight cats who were left behind after its former resident was evacuated. The bowl of cat food on the ground was originally intended to lure the cats from their "hiding places", but after the troops found none of the cats, the food was left behind to feed the cats whenever they returned. Water was also donated by the soldiers for the cats. (Photo by Spc. Chris Jones, 40th PAD)



NEW ORLEANS — Staff Sgt. Charles Leslie of the Oregon National Guard and Spc. Jacob Leslie of the 82nd Airborne Division were reunited after 18 years while deployed to support the military's Hurricane Katrina relief effort. (Photo by Spc. Chris Jones, 40th PAD)

"reunited"

continued from page 3

said Staff Sgt. Leslie, "I was just like, 'damn, that's my boy.'"

Eighteen years ago, a divorce divided the Leslies, and Spc. Leslie ended up in Minneapolis, Minn., with his mother.

"You know how Army life is, especially these days," said Staff Sgt. Leslie. "You're always moving around; there's

very little time for contact."

But the two aren't thinking about the past. There is too much "catching up to do," said Spc. Leslie.

The younger Leslie is planning to take leave and make a trip to Portland, Ore., to visit his father, once his unit returns to Fort Bragg, N.C.

"I'm going to spend as much time as I can with him," said Spc. Leslie. "It's just exciting."

Where's my little girl?...

NEW ORLEANS — A stuffed doll sticks out of the root system of a once majestic oak tree that stood on Canal Street. Though it looks posed, it is unknown how the doll came to rest there. (Photo by Spc. Joshua M. Risner, 40th PAD)

